

50 Articles of War

GEORGE SCOTT RAILTON

PEACE OR WAR?

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It is a striking fact that although there is scarcely a year in the world's history during which no great nation is engaged in war, the very thought of that multiplication of horrors is so repulsive that no one, not even the chief of a half-savage tribe, will admit that he desires war—until the war frenzy has already grasped his nature and subdued all calmness and reason and good feeling beneath its horrible power. Kings and statesmen step forward and demand enormous grants of money and vast levies of flesh and blood with the most desperate and repeated assurances that their only desire is to preserve peace. And nations rush to arms with the cry, "We don't want to fight." In war, the "roaring lion" of the pit comes forth without mask, or hesitancy of any kind, displaying all his hideous form at once, and producing in open daylight before the world, not only all that can be performed in his own best style of vileness and abomination, but actually showing at the same time, in no small degree, the agonies, the piteous wailings, and the ruin—the death—that sin brings forth.

This "land of peace" has been filled for months past with the news and the whisperings of war until the air seems already to reek with the blood, and charred flesh, and hospital humors, and festering pestilence, and accumulating filthiness of distant lands where men have slain one another until there was no more power to slay, and destroyed until nothing remained to destroy.

No wonder at the ghastly eagerness of everyone to know whether their own brethren are to be sent forth to add to the devil's dungheaps of murdered men, or whether the desire for peace so constantly professed everywhere is to be honestly exemplified.

And yet there will be wars—not only one but many, as long as this wretched world continues. The war-fever, like some hellish plague, will spread its deadly contagion, century after century, amongst people after people, until the sword has reaped its horrid harvest out of every homestead and desolated every



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family in every land. If any proof were wanted that evil is not a mere habit or influence amongst men but the production of a gigantic genius—of a mighty, living, real being, who moves incessantly amongst us, and sleeplessly labors for our destruction, it would only be necessary to point to this one fact—that men, seeing and knowing right well what war means, can be maddened sufficiently to rush into it.

WAR AGAINST GOD.

But more terrible even than all the wars ever waged between man and man is the fearful conflict incessantly carried on between man and His God. Here all the wretched follies and appalling horrors of every other warfare are thrown utterly into the shade. Here there is no brazen show of might and force and bravery to hide the cowardice and childish folly of the enterprise. Here is no glittering star of sham glory to invite fools on to disgrace. Here is a certain invariable looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall consume the adversaries, for everybody who will only stop and look. Here is no suspicion of villainy, the suppression of which may make excuse for the commission of greater villainy still, for everybody knows in his heart that God is good. And yet men, women, children even, from the very dawn of reason, rush to the battle against their Father, their Friend, their only Refuge and Help, and fight on until they not only destroy themselves and their all, but blight everything that is beautiful and good around them, and drag even the Blessed One from His throne to be besmeared with the mud and filth and blood and misery of a guilty wrecked world. On, on, on they go, until the smoky cloud of their torment rises up for ever out of hell one vast monument of the infamy and madness of resisting God.

You see that young woman in all the pride and sweetness of her early beauty? As she listens to some honest man of God who points to the Lamb of God, wrapt in the darkness and agonies of the cross, and shows her that her sins have done it all; or while a host of true, loving hearts pour forth their earnest song of praise to Him that was slain for them, the spirit of the Lord compels her to see and feel it all—her lip quivers; she can scarcely control herself at all; she sits powerless. But it is only for a little while. Wait just ten minutes. You shall see her rush away with a flushed face directly; you shall hear her old merry laugh again, and listen to the same giddy talk she was compelled to break off when she entered those walls.



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"Follow Jesus of Nazareth, indeed! Aha—let Him bleed, let Him groan away, let Him beg and entreat; I cannot stop. I have an engagement. I am going to dance and sing. I shall be at a party tomorrow evening." On, on, on; dance, sing, play, please everybody, be damned, let everybody be damned. What does it all matter? What else should one do? That is human life at its prettiest—war against God.

You see that man? He knows his business; oh, yes! no mistake about that. Clever, careful, diligent, always at it, never give up, look after number one, let everybody else do the same or take their chance—push, push, push. Succeed? of course he will succeed. He has succeeded, he is succeeding; what ever is to prevent his success? Why bless you he may even succeed some day in "the Church of God," and have his name amongst its officers, and dangle his gold chain, and swagger his purse upon its platforms. Succeed? why to be sure, what in the world else is he to do but succeed.

"But Jesus! Jesus!" The man that is speaking will have it that he is not listening to Jesus, that he is trampling upon the very blood of Jesus! "Jesus! Jesus!! Well really, when one comes to think, that is something new certainly. Knocking at my heart." he says, "and I won't let him in. Ah, yes, I remember how I felt once about that."

Two minutes. Gone again to his business, to his gains, to his success, to his idols. Stop being worldly, stop fighting against God—impossible! "Let me alone; I really have not time to think about my soul, or God, or heaven, or hell, or the judgment day; I really must be gone."

Gone, gone, gone to waste himself in the senseless strife for nothing; to sweep all that is heavenly, and holy, and true, as far away from his own circle as possible; gone to resist all God's plans; to despise and reject His love; to forget Him altogether, if possible; gone to Hell. And that is human life at its best—war against God. There is something far more bitter than all that.

You see that Christian? Converted beyond a doubt; determined to go to heaven; separate, to a very large extent from the world; but—but, but there is something—aye! perhaps several things—held back from God. Indulgences persisted in, bad habits continued, duties neglected, all tell of a partial



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withholding of the heart from Him to whom we owe all if we owe anything. And this is done in the light, until the light changes into darkness,—darkness, it may be, ending, alas! in eternal midnight. One of God's own children, one of His own friends, fighting against God! Oh, it is awful, and yet it is the common run of ordinary Christian life—war against God.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

Oh, is it not all enough to turn heaven in darkness and blood! “We speak of the realms of the blest.” The blessed who is fought against incessantly, and always has been since the world began. the Blessed who loves His enemies, and is yet compelled to fight against them. Well may He cry, “Come and see if there was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow.” Does He never long for some stoppage of the ceaseless, raging storm? Does His heart never ache for somebody's love? Oh, yes, that it does. “Oh, that there was such a heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always,” is His feeling today, with regard to every child of man, as much as it was 3000 years ago. A longing still, alas! how much disappointed and despised.

Chased out of his own world, the Son of Man turns at last with those words so full of sweetness, and yet with such a depth of bitter sorrow as well. “My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you.” “Not as the world giveth.” Alas! no, Lord. It has given Thee nothing but scorn, and hate, and resistance, even until now!

But oh! brethren, what shall we give? Who will really love God? Who will leave all and follow Him wholly? Who will stand up and help Him against a world in arms? Who will lay down their lives as He has laid down His to make peace? Who will be content always to endure, always to struggle, always to be trampled upon, always to be despised, always to be The King's Own?

It is only for such soldiers always to be at peace whilst continually at war, always to have the table spread by the Shepherd's hands, though always in sight of the foe, always to be “in distresses,” and yet always able to “take pleasure” in them, always to be suffering and yet always to be triumphant. Oh! for the sake of God and men, and love and peace, and truth and heaven, and all that is worth



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caring for, let us fight and fight, and fight, and never cease fighting to the end!
And the very God of peace shall be with us.

